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# Gandhi's Civic Ahimsa: A Standard for Public Justification in Multicultural Democracies

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The question I wish to address here is whether and to what extent Mahatma K. Gandhi's theory of nonviolence can serve as the basis of a public philosophy—specifically, a standard of public argumentation and discourse surrounding competing truth-claims—in multicultural democracies. By competing truth-claims, I refer to the problem of radically different "truths" that often confront each other in the public realm in these societies; truths that are based, we might say, on metaphysical, religious, moral, or spiritual beliefs about the nature of human beings and of the universe and of the human good. The belief in these truths, as we know, intervenes frequently in public life, and these truths often collide with one another in multicultural societies where different members of the polity live by different sorts of moral and metaphysical truths. European nations, for instance, are struggling with the conflicting truth-claims that have appeared on the national agenda by increasing numbers of immigrants, whether it is the issue of veiling among young Muslim women in France or patriarchal family practices that conflict with the values of sex equality in Scandinavia. In the United States, deep-seated disagreements over issues like abortion or euthanasia continue to bubble despite a long-held and uneasy legal truce on many such matters. Political theorists have struggled to confront this problem through a variety of conceptual lenses. Debates pertaining to the politics of multiculturalism, toleration, or recognition have all been concerned with the question of pluralism as one of the most urgent facts of political life, in need of both theoretical and practical illumination.[1] I want to ask the question: Does Gandhi's political theory offer us some way in which we can understand

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and judge public discourse about such truth-claims when they arise in public life? And if so, does his theory offer us a new way of understanding the political world?

In answering these questions, I put forth an understanding of Gandhian nonviolence which I call civic *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* is of course the Gandhian term for nonviolence, which for Gandhi was deeply tied to a certain metaphysics and a certain view of truth-seeking. Here I describe the elements of a civic, secular theory of nonviolence detached from any spiritual view, and I argue that this civic *ahimsa* can in fact serve as a public standard of arbitration and justification in multicultural or multi-religious societies where competing truth-claims intervene in public debates. Certainly, we should recognize that political conflict in pluralist societies is not restricted solely to a conflict between truth-claims. Much of political conflict arises from conflicts that are rooted in strictly economic interests (for instance, debates over tax policy or healthcare reform) or in struggles for power and influence (for instance, electoral politics or debates over foreign policy). Gandhian civic *ahimsa*, therefore, need not be seen as a method to adjudicate all conflicts over every kind of political debate. Rather, I restrict myself here to claiming that Gandhian civic *ahimsa* has particular resonance for those conflicts that are explicitly rooted in competing truth-claims, with conflicting metaphysical views as their basis (for instance, debates over abortion, immigrants' cultural rights or gay marriage, rather than tax policy, healthcare reform or foreign policy).[2] I will also describe more precisely what is meant by a public standard of arbitration or justification, arguing that it offers us a way to understand and judge public discourse and argumentation, rather than resolve conflicts at the policy level.

I begin by describing the ontological assumptions underlying Gandhi's civic virtue of nonviolence and its various elements. I then go on to discuss the sense in which this may constitute a standard of public justification, arguing ultimately that the vision of politics and political life that emerge from civic *ahimsa* carry within them the potential for understanding politics in a new way, offering a significant improvement over existing predominant models of public discourse. In the end, I argue that the adoption of such a Gandhian framework in civic contexts beyond the Indian one serves to push further the possibility of a truly cosmopolitan political theorizing in which texts from one tradition can speak to political

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dilemmas beyond their own time and place by causing us to rethink our favorite assumptions and reimagine the political universe through new lenses of vision.

## Gandhi's Civic Ahimsa: Assumptions and Requirements

Following the Vedic Hindu tradition of *advaita*, or nonduality, Gandhi sees the cosmos as a divine whole within which human beings participate and the task of human life as ultimate reunification with this divine consciousness, through which one comes to know the Absolute Truth or God. Ontologically, then, Man can potentially experience the infinitude of her own being, transcending the limitations of worldliness and participating in a divine whole greater than herself.[3] Human beings are the kinds of beings who travel this path of perfectibility, and the task of human life, for Gandhi, is the very progress from human limitation to approximating the state of perfection, through "ceaseless striving." However, most human beings are in practice also deeply limited in their capacity to see the Absolute Truth, which is complex, pluralistic, and fluid in nature: "What may appear as truth to one person will often appear as untruth to another."[4] Absolute Truth is so multifaceted that it cannot adequately be captured by any one mind or manifested entirely in any given human life. Thus, any one person's grasp of knowledge about the moral world is necessarily incomplete, and the totality of Truth remains, for the most part, elusive to any individual person or set of people. The path toward Truth is ridden with difficulty and the constant possibility of errors in understanding.

What implications does this notion of humanness have for Gandhi's vision of politics? Because truth-seeking is an inescapable part of human life for Gandhi, the spiritual and the ethical quest for truth must serve as the driving purpose for the other realms of life and quite especially for the political.[5] In contrast to many modern Western views, the "political" for Gandhi was not to be seen as an autonomous sphere of human life, guided by its own set of assumptions and principles. Rather, the political is no different than any other realm of human action: it is to be guided by the ongoing quest for truth, such that the political aspect of human selfhood is not separable from the rest of one's being.[6] Unlike other, more ascetic branches of Hindu and Buddhist thought which marginalized the political

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by treating it as a negative externality to be subjugated by the spiritual, Gandhi revived the sphere of the political by linking it to the quest for truth: the political was, for Gandhi, intrinsically a realm of truth-seeking.[7] The challenge of politics, as with any other realm of life, is constant vigilance to ensure that even as one is epistemologically limited, one's worldly actions accord with the seeking of truth.[8] At the same time, violence in politics is unjustified, Gandhi claims, "because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and therefore not competent to punish."[9] The problem of authority is inextricably tied to that of knowledge—it is because of our difficulty in coming to know the Truth that certain kinds of political action become unjustifiable. Meanwhile, nonviolent political action is also a means to ensure that politics remains firmly guided by the requirements of truth-seeking. Thus, the Gandhian doctrine of nonviolence is a response to both the idea of politics as a realm of truth-seeking as well as the limitations of moral knowledge on human understanding.

Elsewhere, I have argued that Gandhi's theory of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, is initially described as a commitment to this truth-seeking in the most comprehensive sense, as the fullest pursuit of total moral virtue resembling what Gandhi calls a creed or a religion, a whole way of life, along with the total commitment to all the philosophical and metaphysical assumptions underlying the practice.[10] But I also argue that *ahimsa* can be creatively reinterpreted as a "civic" virtue, that is, we may see it a secular virtue that does not rely on the metaphysical assumptions of Hinduism and perfectionism in the way that Gandhi does. Nonviolence described as total moral virtue resembles what Gandhi calls a creed or a religion. He also refers to nonviolence as a "law of life" or a life-force,[11] emphasizing its spiritual components. However, Gandhi also makes the following distinction between a creed and a policy: "A particular practice is a policy when its application is limited to time and space. Highest policy is therefore fullest practice."[12] Gandhi sometimes suggests that nonviolence can only be practiced in this manner, as a creed or a way of life: "Non-violence to be a creed has to be all-pervasive. I cannot be non-violent about one activity of mine and violent about others. That would be a policy, not a life-force."[13] Yet, Gandhi also accepts the possibility of something less than the fullest pursuit of nonviolence: "To expect a whole mass of men and women to obey that law [of *ahimsa*] all at once is not to

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know its working…the limited measure of its application can be realized in respect of masses of people within a short time."[14]

Can nonviolence as a civic virtue be isolated from the creed-like elements of *ahimsa*, and if so, what might it look like? Gandhi's views on this are quite inconsistent. On the one hand, his metaphysical posture commits him to rejecting any separation of public/private, politics/religion, moral/civic. Accordingly, in many instances, he disavows any moves toward a "lesser" form of *ahimsa* that would lower moral and political standards in order to make it more accessible. He considers this a tainted mode of political action that does not live up to the fullest expression of *ahimsa*. Yet Gandhi occasionally wavers: Raghavan Iyer cites various instances in which Gandhi acknowledges that the standard of *ahimsa* may need to be adjusted for certain situations, that *ahimsa* as policy was the "next best thing" to *ahimsa* as creed, and that *ahimsa* often demands compromises.[15]

Anthony Parel tells us, then, that we can think of *ahimsa* in terms of something like a civic virtue; he calls this the virtue of the citizen versus that of the monk.[16] So if we think of *ahimsa* as a civic virtue, we think of it as something that can be at work in the public realm, the virtue of the citizen or the statesman, and appropriate for political life, with no basis in any particular metaphysic. I will call this civic *ahimsa*. This civic virtue of *ahimsa*, I want to argue, can be seen as the potential basis for a public philosophy in multicultural or multireligious democracies where conflicting truth-claims constitute the core of many public debates. Taken together, the requirements of the civic virtue of *ahimsa* can be used as a public standard for the justification of and arbitration among political views and actions.

## Civic Ahimsa as a Public Philosophy of Arbitration

It is necessary, then, to identify exactly what is meant by civic *ahimsa* and what exactly it can be asked to accomplish in a multicultural or multireligious society. To begin, let me outline how civic *ahimsa* might serve as the public philosophy of a multicultural society. Elsewhere, I have argued that Gandhi's *ahimsa* be seen as a public standard for moral and political arbitration, not in the sense of mediating a conflict, but rather as a method of adjudication that allows people to use their own judgment to make

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moral and political choices in consonance with the truth as they see it as well as to present these choices in public discourse and provide public justifications for that action. It is in this sense that *ahimsa* arbitrates—it allows one to pass judgment upon the worthiness of an action, and it could apply either to the political actors who are themselves parties to a conflict (in that they would use the criteria to judge their own actions) or to observers attempting to make sense of and judge the truth-claims involved in a conflict.[17] This civic *ahimsa* can also serve as the public standard for engaging in political discourse and action related to conflicting truth-claims in multireligious or multicultural democracies. It allows citizens to present their metaphysical views in public discourse and action, while acting in ways that express their deepest convictions as political actors and participants, but also asserting, when in the position of an observer, spectator or judge, their insistence that these discourses and actions adhere to certain criteria. Civic *ahimsa* allows citizens of a multicultural polity to say, "You may certainly bring your truth-seeking into public discourse, but here are the criteria by which you may do so." Accepting civic *ahimsa* as a standard of public justification calls for a collective commitment to this ethic.

What does this mean? Civic *ahimsa*, I submit, can be thought of as a way of allowing and assessing the use of moral and metaphysical arguments within public policymaking, using the criteria of adherence to a method. Assessing the level of adherence to this method and to the criteria of this method, one might say, can serve as a public norm that allows us to adjudicate which party's moral claims may be considered permissible in policymaking. In this sense, civic *ahimsa* is not necessarily a method of conflict resolution, for it need not directly adjudicate the resolution of conflicts at a policy level. Policy decisions about the validity of competing moral views can continue to be made as they have been: in courts, in legislative bodies, or through electoral processes and referenda. Decisions about constitutional limits on marriage in California, for instance, could continue to be made either through electoral referenda such as the recent Proposition 8 or through judicial processes that might potentially override the validity of the Proposition in the courts. These decisions, however, are often preceded by much public discourse, debate and activism, and civic *ahimsa* can serve as a standard for allowing, judging and justifying this public discourse and political action over controversial issues involv-

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ing foundational truths. The criteria of civic *ahimsa* subject the discourses and actions involved in these processes to scrutiny, as citizens attempt to influence one another or the judicial or executive mechanisms of policy-making. It tells us what sorts of arguments, ideas, speeches, and actions claiming to be based on truth might be permissible within public debate and activism, particularly when parties are pleading for a certain policy outcome based on a moral or metaphysical claim. Thus, civic *ahimsa* is not necessarily a method of deciding competing truth-claims or resolving conflicts based on these claims: instead, it is a recommendation for those involved in public debate and disagreements to ask themselves which kinds of actions and discourses based on truth-claims are justifiable in public discourse and which kind are not.

What, then, is involved in this practice of civic *ahimsa*? I submit that the practice of civic *ahimsa* involves three requirements based roughly on the three components of Gandhi's truth-seeking that I have described at length elsewhere.[18] These three requirements would be seen as constraints on the truth-based arguments of any member of the polity attempting to influence policymaking. The first requirement is that of epistemological humility and self-scrutiny, which requires that she who presents her metaphysical views publicly must do so only after subjecting her own position to great scrutiny, acknowledging the potential fallibility of her own grasp of the "truth" as well as the possibility that her adversary may have a better grasp than she does. Practically and politically, this requires political actors to give serious consideration to the viewpoints of their adversary and not dismiss them out of hand without a fair hearing. This demonstrates respect for the adversary as a fellow human being engaged in the search for truth, to whose position one owes at least some presumptive respect until proven otherwise. In judging the actions of each party, we ask which (if any) party had demonstrated such humility and respect in good faith, through either their actions or public discourse. Did their actions/discourse demonstrate convincingly that they respected their adversary and gave due credence to their truth claim? Or did the actor dismiss out of hand the adversary's position, without considering its merits? Did they simply not give credence to their adversary's search for truth or, worse, characterize her position in terms that were demeaning or humiliating?

Second, the Gandhian method requires that one adhere strictly to the

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requirements of moral persuasion through discourse, and attempt to convert one's adversary to one's own moral position, as the initial step in political conflict. Parties to a conflict must engage in rigorous persuasion through negotiation and discourse, while arguing respectfully and humbly for the moral superiority of their own position. Only when such persuasion has failed should they attempt to use nonrational (yet nonviolent) means of persuasion. By requiring all political actors to engage their adversaries' moral position, Gandhi wants to underscore the point that politics is a search for the truth, rather than simply a struggle for political advantage or victory in arguments. Actions that aim to gain only political advantage without engaging the adversary's moral position, attempting to argue for the *de facto* superiority of one's own moral position, are not to be granted credibility. Those who simply want to stipulate their own beliefs and attempt to have them gain advantage in the political realm, simply because these beliefs are their own, are not adhering to the requirements of nonviolence. Only those who have arrived at their position after confronting persistent doubt and self-scrutiny can convert others to their position. Conversely, those who engage in such discourse must also be willing to be persuaded: "while he carries on his own persuasive activity, he allows the opponent every opportunity and indeed invites him to demonstrate the correctness of his…position, and to dissuade him of his own position."[19]

Finally, the activist must be willing to suffer nonviolently, undergo punishment, and invite legal sanction, if necessary, without harming others. The final step of undergoing suffering serves as the test of true conviction. It allows the activist to draw on her fundamental convictions regarding the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, in a way that demonstrates (*i*) the relevance of this conviction in a particular instance, (*ii*) the strength of this conviction, and (*iii*) the acknowledgment of the position's potential fallibility. If one believes so strongly in the validity of a truth as the basis of a political position, then one should be willing to suffer for it, in a way that harms only oneself. In so doing, one has acknowledged the potential fallibility of one's own position, yet has dramatized that position by suffering the consequences alone. Such action could take the form of civil disobedience, long marches in harsh conditions, deliberate lawbreaking with intent to invite the full sanction of the law, or simply a dramatic act such as fasting publicly, "sitting-in" or other prolonged

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discomfort to gain attention/empathy.[20] Notice also that this dramatization would be a means of last resort, only after genuine moral persuasion through discourse had been exhausted. Nonviolent suffering is not trivialized as a mere political stunt; that is, those who simply strike, boycott, fast, or break the law without having engaged in moral discourse would not be granted validity.

Because political action is but one way in which she seeks the truth, a political agent acts nonviolently, understanding that her vision of the truth may be mistaken and her adversary's more complete than her own. Nonviolent political action implicitly acknowledges the possibility of error in any one person's understanding of truth at any given time: if we are mistaken, we alone suffer the consequences of our mistakes.[21] This reinforces the notion of politics as an effort to seek the truth. Through her nonviolent suffering, the nonviolent political actor hopes to engage her adversary in a joint examination of their respective truth-claims. One's adversary, then, is not simply someone whose own moral or political "truth" is mistaken and, therefore, to be overthrown by force. Rather, it is because we keep ourselves open to the possibility that her "truth" may, in fact, be valid, that we treat her as an equal partner in the search for truth and demonstrate to her our conviction in terms that do not threaten her. In a strategy of nonviolent political action, suffering also operates to break through the rational defenses of the opponent when the appeal of reason has failed as well as to dramatize one's moral position through a sort of "shock treatment," demonstrating the activist's strength of conviction, representing her sincerity by the willingness to suffer for her moral position.

The nonrational, emotive elements of Gandhian political action represented in the act of suffering are by no means separable from the rest of Gandhian thought. In this sense, Gandhi presents a far more real assessment of the political world than one which always assumes pure rationality on the part of all actors. The appeal to emotion suffuses Gandhi's entire notion of political action, rather than simply the step of self-suffering. Certainly, self-suffering is to be undertaken subsequent to attempts at moral persuasion through discourse, which must always be the first strategy of the political actor. However, she does not appeal first to reason and then to emotion, as though the two were entirely separate. Rather, the appeal to emotion always underlies the various steps in

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Gandhian political action, even in the initial steps of self-scrutiny and of moral persuasion.

Notice, then, that the "adjudicatory" or "justificatory" role of the three criteria of civic *ahimsa* would apply to what Gandhi would call practical or relative truth-claims, rather than to claims about comprehensive truth. That is, in claiming to "evaluate" certain political truth-claims, citizens and policymakers need not profess to ascertain the validity of an entire belief system. Rather, they can assess the truth status of a particular political action or project, based on adherence to the three criteria of the nonviolent method.[22] Notice also that in claiming to "evaluate" truth-claims, the standard of public adjudication or justification mentioned here can pertain only to specific actions, rather than to moral or metaphysical belief systems. That is, citizens and policymakers, in assessing the truth status of a political action, discourse or project based on adherence to civic *ahimsa*, need not make an evaluative statement on the overall truth status of the underlying metaphysical claim. Indeed, the convictions or belief systems underlying these actions or discourses are always brought to the fore in the course of political action. But civic *ahimsa* allows us to decide whether or not to grant legitimacy to the actions and decisions of the parties to a conflict, asking whether the parties have adhered to the requirements of civic *ahimsa*. Instead of focusing simply on the kinds of reasons given for a particular position, the requirements of civic *ahimsa* shift the focus of justification to the actions that go along with these reasons. Reason-giving continues to be important as it is in many other models—after all, we come to the truth of a matter by weighing the reasons given on each side of an argument.[23] However, civic *ahimsa* adds an additional component to the evaluative process by subjecting the public discourse and actions accompanying the reasons to scrutiny. To return to the example of the recent passing of Proposition 8 in California, when assessing the validity of constitutional limits on gay marriage, civic *ahimsa* would not necessarily give judges, elected officials, or fellow citizens a way to judge the truth-claims about the metaphysical meaning and status of marriage underlying either side's arguments. What it would do, however, is give them a way to assess the validity and viability of the truth-based arguments, actions, and discourses that were brought into the public realm in arguing for one position or the other. One might object that policy decisions about arguably metaphysical matters, such as abor-

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tion or gay marriage, should require an honest evaluation of their very truth status, rather than be based on an assessment of their proponents' or opponents' method of argumentation. That is, should not judges or citizens decide on these issues based precisely on the truth of the matter, rather than on how they are being argued for (or against)? But using civic *ahimsa* as a standard reminds us that even metaphysical contemplation of policy decisions rarely occurs within a vacuum devoid of public reasoning and activism and that policymaking outcomes are also be deeply intertwined with the quality of public argumentation.

Moreover, this Gandhian model holds us to a different ideal of the sorts of reasons that are acceptable in public argumentation—namely, those that are accompanied or supported by certain kinds of speech and action in the political arena (humility, discourse, and nonviolent suffering). This account arises in part from the rather different and more pragmatic way of thinking about politics that Gandhi offers. Instead of separating political activity from the rest of human life, with specifically political belief and action seen as being separable from other kinds of theoretical commitments,[24] Gandhi presents a vision in which thought, action, and politics are all continuous with one another, not neatly separable into distinctly theoretical or practical aspects of one's being. On such an organic view of human life, theory and praxis are equally important and come under scrutiny equally.

Certainly, it might be argued that making a public truth-claim does not automatically make one a genuine truth-seeker and that the imposition of one's own truth-claim is often a thinly veiled desire for the exercise of power, rather than for the sincere desire for politics to be based upon truth as one sees it. That is, one might say that opponents of gay marriage are simply seeking the preponderance of Christianity in politics rather than seeking truth or that immigrants seeking the right of women to veil or to conduct arranged marriage are simply staking a claim to power. But the Gandhian criterion of disciplined and conscious self-suffering ensures that those who want to make truth-claims in politics are held to their stated goal and that sincere truth-seeking rather than power-seeking is rewarded in those cases. The criterion of suffering trumps measures such as lobbying, advertising, coercive measures, and other kinds of arguments that depend on economic or physical power. That is to say, public discourse about constitutional measures against gay marriage

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would be conducted and judged not on grounds of the amount of money spent on advertising campaigns for or against a position, but rather on the self-suffering involved in the political actions of its proponents or opponents, thus guarding against bad faith attempts at political persuasion. Certainly, civic *ahimsa* privileges the perspective of those political actors who seek the truth—but only if they seek to make policy based on truth and if they can demonstrate the sincerity of their desire, through the third step of conscious, disciplined self-suffering. Nor should the method of civic *ahimsa* require the moral stance of a truth-seeker in politics in general; as we have already said, civic *ahimsa* is not a method for resolving all policy conflicts, and not all conflicts need to be resolved on the grounds of their truth-claims. Instead, civic *ahimsa* sets standards for the public behavior and argumentation of those who do seek to bring any metaphysical view into their political argumentation, both allowing for such truth-seeking in certain instances, yet setting limits and constraints on it.

## The Advantages of Civic Ahimsa

But what exactly is the purpose of adopting this standard and how is it superior to any other model of public argumentation or justification? Contemporary imaginings of public discourse and argumentation are dominated by political liberalism, and particularly (although not exclusively) by a Rawlsian version. For John Rawls, the "fact of reasonable pluralism" is a permanent feature of modern societies. Disagreement about fundamental moral and religious questions—"comprehensive doctrines," which "include conceptions of what is of value in human life…ideals of personal virtue and character, that are to inform… non-political conduct"[25]—is not a temporary condition, but "the normal result of the exercise of human reason" under free institutions.[26] The problem therefore is to find principles of political justice that all can affirm despite their moral, philosophical, and religious differences. Preserving stability in the face of such pluralism calls for theories of justice to be free of controversial moral assumptions and metaphysical foundations: "by avoiding comprehensive doctrines we try to bypass religion and philosophy's profoundest controversies."[27] As a practical matter, no "general moral conception can provide a publicly recognized

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basis for a conception of justice in a modern democratic state."[28] Rawls' solution is the famous "overlapping consensus" on the implicitly recognized basic ideas and principles within a democratic society.[29]

Rawls repeatedly affirms that the task of political philosophy is not only to provide justification and arbitration in matters of political justice—"order[ing] the many conflicts of justice that arise in public life"[30]—but also to preserve stability, fair cooperation, and social cohesion. The appropriate way to achieve this is a method of "avoidance,"[31] in which one avoids argument on the basis of any contested moral or metaphysical premise, any controversial claim about what is true. Instead, in justifying any principle to a pluralist community, political philosophers must make reference to the history and the shared experiences of a community to forge an "overlapping consensus" on a conception of justice.[32] This consensus is formulated in terms of intuitive ideas viewed as latent in the public culture of a democratic society, ideas that people with opposing religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines are able to agree on from within their respective positions. The aim of political philosophy in pluralistic democracies can no longer be the pursuit of truth, but rather the pursuit of "informed and willing political agreement between citizens."[33]

The Rawlsian model is not completely indifferent to truth or to morality. Rawls emphasizes that his conception of justice is moral in that it "has conceptions of person and society, and concepts of right and fairness, as well as principles of justice with their complement of the virtues."[34] What distinguishes his conception is that the morality it espouses is ostensibly detached from any one particular moral and/or comprehensive view. It involves "no prior commitment to any wider doctrine"[35] and is constructed from a public consensus on shared principles implicit in the political life of the society.

For practitioners of Gandhian civic *ahimsa*, in contrast, no such restriction would apply: any moral view, regardless of attachment to a particular truth system or comprehensive doctrine, would be admissible in matters of public justification, so long as it is accompanied by the three preceding criteria. I want to argue, then, that civic *ahimsa* has three major advantages over the predominant liberal model of public discourse. First, the political culture resulting from the practice of civic *ahimsa* would allow a place for truth-seeking and would be richer than the ideal of political liberalism, as articulated by its major proponents like Rawls. Adopting

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civic *ahimsa* as the standard of public justification avoids the impoverishment and sanitization of political life that is called for by the Rawlsian vision, resulting instead in a complex and enriching politics of continuing engagement among conflicting truths, while avoiding some of the considerable costs associated with the Rawlsian model in a pluralist society. Second, a Gandhian vision would provide a more realistic understanding of political life. Contrary to popular characterizations of the Mahatma, which portray him as a half-naked mystic, immersed in a world of bizarre living experiments and somewhat removed from reality, civic *ahimsa* offers us a model of thinking about politics that may, in many ways, be more "real" than the one offered by Rawls and other modern liberals. Finally, Gandhi's civic *ahimsa* challenges the idea that the modern liberal notion of selfhood is necessarily the best basis to understand or to organize a tolerant political life, suggesting that political life can in fact be both metaphysically driven and tolerant. I will address each of these three advantages in turn.

To begin, a Gandhian model of civic *ahimsa* offers a far richer understanding of political life. Perhaps the main cost of the Rawlsian model is the impoverished understanding of political life and of the activity of political philosophy that emerge from it.[36] The banishment of truth to the realm of the private, with stability and consensus as overriding concerns, leaves Rawls' enterprise looking more "political" than "philosophical."[37] Because it is focused on establishing agreement on the acceptance of certain ideas, rather than the proof of their truth, the Rawlsian model turns the activity of political philosophy into a political undertaking, rather than a philosophical one. Is not political philosophy, we might argue, precisely the search for truth, involving argumentation about controversial metaphysical premises? And, in banishing such argumentation and subordinating the pursuit of truth to that of agreement, the members of such a society would lose the opportunity to engage one another in a mutually enriching (if contentious) dialogical enterprise in which each one's substantive commitments are subject to questioning, articulation, and, perhaps, renegotiation—a process that some might argue lies the very core of democratic political life.[38] It seems unlikely for the Gandhian (as for many others) that one's view on a matter of political justice will not already have been influenced by her commitment to a moral, philosophical, or religious view. "Bracketing" for political purposes

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our most fundamental religious or moral convictions does no good, for it is likely that we will be similarly divided on questions of political justice.[39] Asserting the "truth" of the matter may be a necessary course of justification for certain kinds of political action, for political change is often driven by engaging rather than avoiding the comprehensive moral and religious doctrines at stake. For instance, it is difficult to see how one might have argued for the injustice of slavery without recourse to some comprehensive moral or metaphysical form of argumentation.[40]

For all these reasons, the Rawlsian model imposes considerable costs on the activity of political philosophy and on political life itself, costs that I believe can be avoided by civic *ahimsa*. Because Gandhi saw politics as inseparable from morality or spirituality, his model views the task of political action as precisely the rough-and-tumble of engagement between comprehensive doctrines, to be rigorously engaged rather than avoided. In contrast to Rawls, Gandhi's civic *ahimsa* explicitly allows—indeed calls for—the parties to a conflict to draw upon their understanding of truth in taking actions of a political nature. At the same time, it provides a way that such truth-claims can confront one another in the public realm, without leading to the sorts of dire consequences that many contemporary liberals fear. In providing political actors with a way for moving beyond dialogue and by subjecting such actions to certain requirements, Gandhi is able to provide a standard for judging the relative merits of each actor's truth-claim. The criteria of epistemological humility and self-scrutiny facilitate constructive public dialogue on controversial matters, while nonviolent suffering allows people to base their political judgments on moral convictions, yet present them for justification in the public realm without disrespecting or harming others. Because only the persons themselves suffer for the conviction they are attempting to argue for, this use of truth-seeking in the public arena is not harmful. Civic *ahimsa* allows strong believers to assert the power of their conviction in some ultimate reality, yet to dramatize the strength of this conviction, if necessary, in a way that is peaceful and not threatening to others. Essentially, an act of self-suffering sends the message: "This is how strongly I feel about this matter. I am willing to suffer for it, not only to show you the strength of my conviction, but also because I respect you as a fellow truth-seeker and would like to try and persuade you of the truth as I see it. I don't intend to harm or to humiliate you and simply want you to see how important this is."

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In contrast to a thinker like Rawls, who fears the destabilizing potential of controversial moral claims and finds ways to avoid such conflict, the Gandhian takes this conflict to be a necessary and perhaps even productive part of political life, for it is the inevitable result of the sort of pluralism that characterizes truth-seeking itself. In this way, a Gandhian vision of political life that allows a plurality of conflicting positions to engage one another rather than close off discussions about truth provides for a far richer and more complex kind of politics—a kind of politics that understands the likelihood and even the necessity of political convictions that are fused, often indissolubly and in complicated ways, with moral or religious views. And given the current backlash in many countries against models of politics that attempt to banish truth from the political arena, the Gandhian model may in fact be a more constructive way to engage (rather than alienate) those who wish to see political life (re)infused with truth-seeking.

Second, in addition to its richness, the Gandhian vision of political action based on civic *ahimsa* also provides a more realistic understanding of political life than its liberal counterpart. For instance, Gandhi's emphasis on the necessity of suffering as a tool of political action suggests he is deeply attentive to the harsh reality that violence is a constant possibility in politics. Despite his insistence on the merging of politics and morality, Gandhi's vision suggests that he is simultaneously able to see the dark, conflictual, and often imperfect nature of the political world. This is perhaps why he insists so strongly on nonviolent suffering as a tool to mitigate these recurring features, by structuring the requirements of political action accordingly—an understanding of politics that may be more pragmatic than one in which we assume that political conflict can altogether be avoided by institutionalizing a kind of "informed agreement" in which citizens' most controversial views are taken off the table.

Gandhi's vision recognizes another key feature of the political world. Inherent in all political action is always the possibility that one may have thrown the weight of one's moral and political effort behind an action or project that turns out to be wrong. We often seek, for instance, to reassure ourselves that the cost of political conflict (whether calculated in terms of money, time, energy, or human life) was "worth it." Did we risk ourselves for the right cause? Embedded in such questions is the possibility, always lurking underneath, that our cause may not have been right or our under-

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standing of a matter misguided. The Gandhian requirements of epistemological humility and nonviolent suffering recognize and attempt to correct for this risk intrinsic to political action, instead of eliminating it altogether.

Another way in which the Gandhian vision is more realistic than the Rawlsian one is in its recognition of what we might call the nonrational or subrational elements of personhood in political life. Gandhi's civic *ahimsa* recognizes that moral and political discourse need not be entirely rational and that they may necessarily involve the less rational sides of our being. Contemporary liberal models of politics and political engagement are, for the most part, attached to Enlightenment ideals of rationality, intellect, and reasonable speech and discourse as the main foundations of political life. Western political thought since Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes has steadily focused on understanding human beings as primarily rational beings who engage in politics using their capacities for reason, speech, and discourse. Politics is about negotiating interests and using one's intellectual and discursive capabilities for such exchange. Influenced later by John Locke and Immanuel Kant, modern Western political theory has focused on sanitizing the political realm by valuing the "higher" human capacities of speech, intellect, and discourse—along with the sorts of political actions and engagements that rely on these capacities—while seeking to eviscerate (or at least contain) the "lower" and more visceral ones, such as passions, desires, religious, or traditional affiliations and primordial attachments. In a view that could be traced back to the ancients (particularly the Stoics), one's passions, sentimental attachments, and intuitive judgments were considered inappropriate sources for moral and political life, because they lay below the level of rationality. Meanwhile, factors such as one's primordial identifying characteristics and religious affiliations were to be considered equally irrelevant; what mattered was a universal capacity for reason which resided in all human beings. Thus, for many Enlightenment thinkers, it was in rising above our primordial attachments, putting aside our religious beliefs and listening to our reason rather than sentiment that we could express what was most "human" about ourselves in our political life.[41] In fact, if post-Kantians such as Rawls or Jürgen Habermas are to be read carefully, modern politics is best sanitized if it is accompanied by a kind of disembodiment, in which these more visceral aspects of human life are

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left out of politics altogether.

Yet, even if we would like political life to be an exchange of rational, free-thinking human beings all engaging in reasonable discourse with one another (the utopian vision often endorsed by many contemporary liberals), politics continues to be an endeavor in which people participate with something other than rational motives; indeed they are often driven by emotive considerations, transcendent beliefs or ascriptive attachments, rather than strictly reasonable motivations. In fact, the most stringent critiques of modern democratic liberal thought emerge from those who accuse its proponents of presuming a disembodied, atomized self, either rationalist or voluntarist, rather than an embodied, situated, passionate self, constituted in large part by attachments and encumbrances.[42] This view of personhood seeks to sanitize politics from what it sees as the corrosive effects of passions, traditions and ascriptive attachments, which are seen to lead away from rationality and toward a fulfillment of situated, particularistic, selfish interests.[43] Good rational arguments—and by extension, good political engagement—are to be abstracted away from the concrete interests, attachments, and embodied personhood of those who make them.

In contrast, employing civic *ahimsa* in public life would suggest that the self is constituted wholly or organically, neither easily detached from transcendent sources of authority, nor easily divided into its constituent components. Civic *ahimsa* would remind us to accept that while human reason is important, another important part of what it means to be human is to be driven by metaphysical convictions as well as emotions, passions, and ascriptive attachments arising from the bonds of gender, community, traditions, practices, or networks of relationships. Gandhi's vision suggests that we are better off building our political theories around this complex recognition of humanness, rather than trying to banish it from political life altogether.

Recognizing the importance of such nonrational sources of human motivation, however, need not be cause for grave concern. By allowing people to engage in politics using these subrational elements of their being under conditions of self-scrutiny and nonviolence, Gandhian civic *ahimsa* would allow these elements of our being to surface, while simultaneously restraining their capacity to inflict harm and cause damage. Politics, Gandhi suggests, can be agonistic, allowing for expression of the subra-

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tional or the nonrational, without being destructive. The realism of this approach recognizes that such motivations cannot be eliminated from political life altogether. Yet, in calling for strict self-scrutiny, moral discourse, and nonviolent self-suffering as the conditions of agonistic political action, Gandhi seeks to bring these subrational motivations under control, so that the energy they produce may be employed constructively. Moreover, in relying on nonviolent self-suffering as the ultimate method of moral conversion, Gandhi recognizes that political solutions require appeal to the emotive and affect-driven parts of human personality, along with the rational and the critical ones.

Finally, the use of Gandhi's civic *ahimsa* challenges the idea that the modern liberal notion of selfhood is necessarily the best basis to understand or to organize a tolerant political life, particularly in situations involving conflict among competing truth-claims. Certainly, Rawls himself is nuanced enough to recognize that as political agents we are driven by our particular convictions; thus, the "bracketing" of the metaphysical that he proposes need not be taken as a sign that he fails to understand the role of metaphysics in political life. What he does wish to do, however, is to insist that a pluralistic yet tolerant political life is best achieved by a heuristic "bracketing" out of metaphysics from politics, and his reason for doing so is that such a strategy is conducive to toleration. But is it really? And is it the best way to achieve that end?

For Gandhi, toleration is best accomplished not by disallowing, but rather by engaging fully in politics those parts of ourselves that are attached to metaphysical convictions. The strength of his position is that he recognizes that the problem of toleration in political life arises not because people make reference to metaphysics, but rather because some people do so without adhering to the norms of equal respect for their adversaries as fellow humans engaged in the search for truth.[44] Toleration has more to do, therefore, with the conditions under which debate over metaphysics takes place, rather than with references to metaphysics itself. By requiring that anyone who wishes to argue publicly about metaphysics adhere strictly to certain dispositional conditions (all of which pertain, in different ways, to respect for others engaged in truth-seeking), the Gandhian vision seeks to show us how political life can be both metaphysically driven and tolerant. Gandhi's thought not only recognizes the critical connection of the self to transcendent sources of authority in

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moral and political action, but it also provides a robust way in which tolerance in politics can be based precisely on this vision of selfhood.

How, then, does the Gandhian avoid the sort of violent and divisive turmoil that pluralists such as Rawls fear, given how willing she is to admit conflicting truth-claims, ascriptive attachments, and subrational motivations into the public arena? The Gandhian view suggests that the genuine pursuit of truth, if moderated by procedural requirements, need not necessarily lead to turmoil. Another distinguishing feature of civic *ahimsa* is the priority of dispositional conditions over substantive commitments within the process of engagement. The dispositional requirements of the civic virtue of nonviolence—that is, the sort of disposition that those engaging in nonviolent action are expected to have—mitigate against any potentially violent conflict among the underlying substantive commitments of the participants to the conflict. The public pursuit of truth about justice need not threaten the security of anyone in a pluralist society as long as guidelines exist for people's interaction with one another in their respective pursuits of the truth: a commitment to pursuing relative rather than Absolute Truth, mutual respect of others, toleration of difference, the commitment to reasoned debate, and the disavowal of nonviolence.[45] A society should have nothing to fear from people who are earnestly committed to working out what is true—on a piecemeal, case-by-case basis, rather than in an absolutist way—and who are respectful of one another's attempts to formulate answers, even when the fundamental metaphysical commitments of each party are at stake. Anyone committed to the genuine pursuit of truth should do so on the basis of mutual respect and toleration and should therefore not be likely to engage in the sort of violent conflict that pluralists like Rawls fear.

Certainly, in a pluralist society, reasonable disagreement may exist among well-intentioned persons exercising conscientiously their powers of reason and judgment in the course of political life.[46] However, to take seriously the requirement of epistemological humility, for instance, causes one to think more deeply about one's stand, than if one were simply staking out a position based on self-interest or convention. It also allows for a more reasonable and humble kind of disagreement among conscientious people—a kind of disagreement that may, in the end, be more productive than destructive to political life. For example, I may take a stand based on the disciplined call of my conscience in any given instance.

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But let us say I do so while realizing that my adversary is worthy of respect as a fellow-truth seeker and that his ideas should be accorded some presumptive respect, since they could potentially be more in tune with the truth than my own. Meanwhile, I scrutinize my own position and subject it to much rigorous examination. If reasonable people take such an approach, then the resulting disagreement, we may say, need not be all that disagreeable. In fact, if combined with the requirement of rational persuasion, it may produce a useful dialogue of philosophical depth, which forces each party to articulate their own moral position and argue for it in the clearest possible terms.[47] Adopting civic *ahimsa* suggests that the problem of conflict has less to do with people's substantive commitments to diverse truth-claims, than with the conditions under which debate over their convictions might occur.[48]

## Conclusions and Implications: Toward a Cosmopolitan Political Thought

Conflicting truth-claims about the meaning, purpose, and status of the "good" life continue to lie at the heart of many public debates in multi-religious and multicultural societies. In most cases, these conflicts are resolved through some combination of power imbalances (one party is simply able to impose its truth; for example, the instinct for many European states to insist that immigrants simply "learn to live like us or get out"), cognitive apartheid (the parties simply ignore each other), or some form of uneasy agreement arrived at solely through legislative, electora, or judicial means (such as, say, *Roe v. Wade* or the passing of constitutional limitations on gay marriage in certain parts of the United States). Civic *ahimsa* accepts none of these as ultimately viable solutions to the problem of conflicting moral or political truths, for it calls for a political life that is intensely dialogical and an engagement of citizens with one another's deepest convictions as the basis of political interaction. Only a civic context in which citizens' recognize one another's humanity by directly engaging each other's deepest beliefs, no matter what discomfort this arouses, can ultimately be a healthy one. In fact, Gandhi's own political *modus operandi* reflected precisely such a tendency to arouse discomfort and make many uncomfortable by placing some of his most controversial yet deeply held beliefs about sexuality or untouchability squarely

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in the public realm, where his interlocutors and opponents could not ignore them. On such a view, the discomfort of encountering the unfamiliarity or potential distastefulness of another's position is a requirement of healthy civic engagement; as is the accompanying requirement that one neither demonize, accuse, or attack one's moral or political opponents during the process of confrontation. In this sense, Gandhi also finds a whole new way to "sanitize" politics: instead of sanitizing politics by removing the possibility of citizens' potential discomfort in encountering the "otherness" of an unfamiliar or uncomfortable metaphysical view, Gandhi seeks to sanitize politics by forcing citizens to confront this otherness quite directly, while reacting respectfully to the discomforts it may arouse.

Of course, the biggest obstacle to the adoption of *civic ahimsa* by any society, we might say, is its very nature as a "civic" virtue: Are not civic bonds precisely the result of specific historical or cultural commonalities that bind, and should not those ideals be the source of one's civic loyalty, rather than a method of justification that is rooted, after all, in an unfamiliar cultural idiom? In other words, should not the idea of "Frenchness" or "Danish-ness" be tied precisely to a certain vision of "how things are done here" and "the things we believe in," rather than to a method of arbitration and justification? I want to argue, however, that to accept civic *ahimsa* as the public standard of arbitration or justification in public debates and conflicts requires no necessary acceptance of Gandhian or Indian political thought as the only appropriate foundation for collective life. Nor should it negate the collective bonds of national history, identity, memory, or political practice in any given society.

Instead, I want to suggest that the adoption of civic *ahimsa* has one final advantage: It demonstrates the possibility of a truly cosmopolitan political thought and a corresponding evolution in our self-understanding as political theorists. It illustrates a point I have made elsewhere; namely that one of the tasks of a more cosmopolitan political theory is precisely to disturb, provoke, and dislocate familiar modes of knowledge by troubling and challenging our settled, existing understandings of political life. A cosmopolitan political thought, I have argued, should see answers emanating from Western thinkers as only one possible set of answers to human questions, but by no means timeless or universal. Nor should it be wary of finding answers to political problems across borders, by suggesting that

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texts can speak only to or for their own contexts or audiences. If political theory as a discipline is to become more genuinely cosmopolitan, then it is increasingly untenable for ideas from non-Western civilizations to remain contained within their own traditions, speaking only to and for their adherents. Explorations of thinkers like Gandhi (or, for that matter, Confucius or Sayyid Qutb) cannot remain tucked away in corners from which they have nothing to say to the discipline of political science at large; of interest only to classicists, postcolonial scholars, comparative political theorists, or area studies "types." In contrast, a cosmopolitan political theory, such as the one I describe, would be one in which we might bring the ideas of Gandhi or Confucius to bear on our discussion of freedom or justice, in the same way that we would use Rawls, Marx, or Hobbes.[49]

Using Gandhi's civic *ahimsa* as a public philosophy beyond the context of its own time and place—namely, the Indian tradition—suggests precisely such a possibility of finding answers to political problems across borders. That is, we should be interested in Gandhi's political thought, both as an expression of self-understanding in a specific context and because we think it has something to say to "us." In so doing, we allow ourselves to be challenged and our understandings of political life dislocated by the unfamiliarity of texts and ideas one may encounter outside the familiar Western canon. This, in turn, should allow us to acknowledge the particularity of our own "prejudices"[50] and ways of viewing the world as well as allow us to potentially imagine our own political world differently. Acknowledging the possibility of adopting Gandhi's civic *ahimsa* in civic contexts beyond simply the Indian one suggests that encounters with texts from other traditions can serve as lenses of illumination, in that they allow us to better see what goes on within our own world and to imagine solutions to our own dilemmas that are novel, beyond the boundaries of our preexisting assumptions. Thus, they serve the very fundamental purpose of changing our vision, providing us with new lenses through which to view our existing moral and political dilemmas.[51]

Civic *ahimsa* is a good example of the capacity to not only reconcile certain elements of modern Western thought—its celebration of civic humanism, its democratic impulses, its egalitarianism, and its emphasis on tolerance—with the spiritual imperatives and truth-claims of other traditions, but also to show how these very resources may be available

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within those traditions. The virtue of Gandhi's way of dealing with this matter is that it shows how attachment to tradition or communal values need not be incompatible with certain ideals of the Enlightenment, such as tolerance and equal respect. It also reveals vividly how Western thought does not have a monopoly on these principles and that there may be other ways to fulfill them, besides the Enlightenment understanding of rational selfhood free of the constraints of external authority. My proposal is that through the study of thinkers such as Gandhi, we may find a way for contemporary politics to accommodate both yearnings for truth and transcendent authority in politics and commitments to tolerance and equal respect. And it is precisely through such engagement with non-Western texts and ideas—such as those of Gandhi—that we may best reconstitute and enrich the project of a more cosmopolitan political thought.

Our encounter with ideas that may seem alien or unfamiliar can in fact be tools that drive our imaginative vision, providing us with new ways of understanding the political world and new models of political order. In this sense, Gandhi's civic *ahimsa* causes us to question many of our long-cherished assumptions: Whether the bracketing of ultimate truth-claims from public life is indeed the best way to promote toleration and preserve peace; whether passions, emotions, and the darker human aspects of personhood can indeed be left out of politics; and whether political life should be structured to isolate citizens from the discomforts of encountering and engaging with alterity in the moral and political views of their compatriots. Solutions to existing problems may thus require us to look beyond the boundaries of "our" canon, rethinking our favorite assumptions about political life and reimagining the political world through different lenses. It is precisely this sort of reinvigoration of political theory that Gandhi's civic *ahimsa* offers us.

## Notes

1. See, among others, Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (2001); Gutmann, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (1992); Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995); Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (1993a); Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition" (1994); and Walzer, *On Toleration* (1997).

2. As we will see later, on Gandhi's view, all political action should

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ultimately be about truth-seeking, and most politically relevant issues are therefore ultimately moral in nature, requiring some view on truth. Yet Gandhi was also highly cognizant that politics as it is usually practiced shows almost no concern for the truth. Thus, I make no normative claim here about whether all politics should, on a strictly Gandhian view, be about truth-seeking and therefore moral or spiritual. Rather, I restrict myself to the claim that Gandhi's civic *ahimsa* can best be applied in those cases where metaphysical doctrines conflict in public discourse and policy-making.

3. See Gandhi, "What is Truth?," *Navajivan* (November 20, 1921); Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (1986), volume 2, pp. 155–58. Here Gandhi claims: "He…who understands truth…comes to know God and…attains *moksha* [liberation] though still encased in the physical frame.…He who strives…ever meditating on truth…will certainly have his whole being filled with truth" (pp. 156, 157). For a fuller explication of Gandhi's metaphysical and epistemological assumptions, see Godrej, "Nonviolence and Gandhi's Truth: A Method for Moral and Political Action" (2006).

4. See "Letter to Narandas Gandhi," in Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (1986), volume 2, p.162–64. Steger, *Gandhi's Dilemma: Nonviolent Principles and Nationalist Power* (2000), p.116, reminds us that Gandhi's views on the possibility of perfection are notoriously ambiguous: while "to say that perfection is not attainable on this earth is to deny God," he also simultaneously held that "not one of us is perfect…[or] able to realize the whole of our spiritual ambition" and that "only a rare person will succeed completely" (Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* [1986], volume 2, pp. 36–37 and 158).

5. See Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (1987), volume 3, p.548: "Is not politics too a part of *dharma*!…Politics also requires purity of conduct." Also see Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (1986), volume 1, p.375: "Political life must be an echo of private life and…there cannot be any divorce between the two"; p.376: "I take part in politics because I feel that there is no department of life which can be divorced from religion"; p.381: "My politics are not divorced from morality, from spirituality, from religion.…A man who is trying to discover and follow the will of God cannot possibly leave a single field of life untouched"; p.391: "For me, every, the tiniest, activity is governed by

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what I consider to be my religion."

6. It is worth noting here that Gandhi seemed not to make much distinction between the spiritual and the moral or ethical, while each of these realms seemed synonymous with truth-seeking: "I use the adjective moral," he claims, "as synonymous with spiritual" (*Harijan* [January 00, 1942]). Religion, Gandhi claimed, "means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe," thus indicating that for him, the imperatives of ethics and spiritual seeking were linked, if not identical (Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* [1986], volume 1, p.391).

7. For a fuller account of the relationship between spirituality and politics in Gandhi's thought, see Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (2000), chapter 3; Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy* (1989), chapter 4; and Parel, "Introduction" (2000).

8. On the relationship between truth and politics in Gandhi, see Chatterjee, "The Moment of Manoeuvre: Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society" (1986); and Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action* (1993), chapters 2–4.

9. Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (1934), p.506.

10. See Godrej, "Nonviolence and Gandhi's Truth: A Method for Moral and Political Action" (2006).

11. Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (1986), volume 2, p.321.

12. Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (1986), volume 2, pp. 302–03

13. Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (1986), volume 2, p.321.

14. Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (1986), volume 2, p.302.

15. See Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (2000), pp. 196–204.

16. Parel, "The Spiritual and the Political in Gandhi's Philosophy." Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (2004).

17. Bondurant undertakes a similar exercise when she attempts to layout the appropriate criteria or steps that define a campaign of *satyagraha*, or what she defines as a "movement growing out of grievances against an established political order" (*Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of*

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*Conflict* [1958], p.40). Here, she outlines the steps chronologically as negotiation and arbitration, preparation for direct action, agitation, issuing of an ultimatum, boycott/strikes, noncooperation, civil disobedience, and usurping the government. In principle, this essay seeks to achieve a similar objective; however, because my goal is some-what different from hers—namely, identifying those criteria/steps that would qualify actions as based on the civic virtue of nonviolence—the Gandhian categories and actions I identify are accordingly somewhat different from hers.

18. See Farah Godrej, "Nonviolence and Gandhi's Truth: A Method for Moral and Political Action" (2006), pp. 301–5.

19. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (1958), p.196. Bondurant is also careful to point out why this sort of political action is not based on and is in fact qualitatively different from compromise. The *satyagrahi*, or practitioner of *satyagraha*, Bondurant says, "is never prepared to yield any position which he holds to be the truth. He is, however, prepared…to be persuaded by his opponent that the opponent's position is…the more nearly true position.…When persuasion has been effected…there is no sacrificing of position" (p.197).

20. For a more detailed description of the sorts of nonviolent actions that are included within the umbrella of *satyagraha*, including the fundamental rules and code of discipline governing nonviolent action, see Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (1958), pp. 36–41.

21. Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (1987), volume 3, p.41.

22. For more on the difference between Gandhi's Absolute and relative truth, see Godrej, "Nonviolence and Gandhi's Truth: A Method for Moral and Political Action" (2006).

23. On the idea of reason-giving in constitutional democracies, see Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" (1999c).

24. See Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical" (1999a), p.405: "Citizens in their personal affairs…may regard their final ends and attachments in a way very different from the way the political conception involves…These convictions and attachments are part of what we may call their 'non-public identity.' "

25. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (1993a), p.13.

26. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (1993a), p.xviii.

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27. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (1993a), p.152.

28. Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical" (1999a), p.390.

29. For more on the overlapping consensus, see Rawls, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus" (1993b); and Rawls, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus" (1999b).

30. Rawls, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus" (1999b), p.437.

31. Rawls, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus" (1999b), p.434.

32. Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical," in Samuel Freeman, ed., *John Rawls: Collected Papers* (1999a), p.395.

33. Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical" (1999a), p.394.

34. Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical" (1999a), pp. 410–11.

35. Rawls, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus" (1999b), p.424. See also Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical" (1999a), p.390.

36. Two of the best critiques on this matter are, among others, Hampton, "Should Political Philosophy be Done Without Metaphysics?" (1989); and Sandel, "Political Liberalism" (1994).

37. On this point, see also Hampton, "Should Political Philosophy be Done Without Metaphysics?" (1989), pp. 807–810.

38. In fact, Sandel argues that the cost of the Rawlsian vision is even greater, in that it may inadvertently contribute to the rise of precisely the sort of intolerance it is designed to avoid: "A politics that brackets morality and religion too completely soon generates its own disenchantment. Where political discourse lacks moral resonance, the yearning for a public life of larger meanings finds undesirable expression.…It thus creates a moral void that opens the way of the intolerant and the trivial and other misguided moralisms" ("Political Liberalism" [1994], p.1794).

39. See Sandel,: "our reflections about justice cannot reasonably be detached from our reflections about the nature of the good life and the highest human ends" ("Political Liberalism" [1994], p.1768).

40. Sandel, "Political Liberalism" (1994), pp. 1778–82.

41. Kant is, of course, the best example of such a view. Nussbaum eloquently explains the indebtedness of the Enlightenment view of reason to Stoicism in "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism" (1997).

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42. Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (1992); Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982) and *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (1996); Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (1990); Nedelsky, "Reconceiving Autonomy: Sources, Thoughts and Possibilities" (1989), "Law, Boundaries and the Bounded Self" (1990); Meyers, ed., *Feminists Rethink the Self* (1997); Flax, "Displacing Woman: Toward an Ethics of Multiplicity" (1998).

43. See Nussbaum, "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism" (1997). Although this view is associated mainly with Kant and the Stoics—and more recently with Nussbaum—it is a view that holds great currency across a variety of strands of thought in mainstream political theory.

44. Hampton, "Should Political Philosophy be Done Without Metaphysics?" (1989).

45. See also Hampton, "Should Political Philosophy be Done Without Metaphysics?" (1989), p.811.

46. Rawls calls this the "burdens of judgment" (*Political Liberalism* [1993a], pp. 54–58).

47. Here, see the famous dialogue between Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, in Ahluwalia and Ahluwalia, *Tagore and Gandhi: The Tagore-Gandhi Controversy* (1981). See also Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action* (1993), chapter 3.

48. On this point, see Hampton, "Should Political Philosophy be Done Without Metaphysics?" (1989).

49. For a fuller explanation of my arguments about a cosmopolitan political thought, see Godrej, "Toward a Cosmopolitan Political Thought: The Hermeneutics of Interpreting the Other" (2009).

50. Here I use prejudice in the Gadamerian sense of an unexamined assumption that forms the implicit background of most of our understandings in a given tradition.

51. Spragens reminds us that works of political theory "give us a vision, a full-scale way of understanding the world of politics in which we must live" (*Book Title* [0000], p.1). After all, the root of "theory" is the Greek word *theorein*, which means "to look, to behold, to contemplate": political theories, Spragens asserts, are intended, among other things, to remedy defects in the way that most of us *see* politics—defects that may carry calamitous consequences. Wolin also reminds us of the crucial role that political theory plays in allowing us to envision and to reimagine our own

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political world. Political philosophy, Wolin tells us, constitutes a way of "seeing" political phenomena—"each theorist has viewed the problem from a different perspective, a particular "angle" of vision (*Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* [2006], p.17).

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